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ABSTRACT

Planning procedures are specifically intended for Nebraska school districts, but are applicable to any school district planning new facilities. The procedures are outlined in three steps: (1) a comprehensive survey of educational facility needs; (2) development and adoption of long-range plans by local boards of education with maximum flexibility to meet changing programs, population patterns, and enrollments; and (3) development of written educational specifications. Advice is offered about securing community involvement, architect and school board roles, and bidding procedures. (Author/MLF)

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school plant planning procedures for

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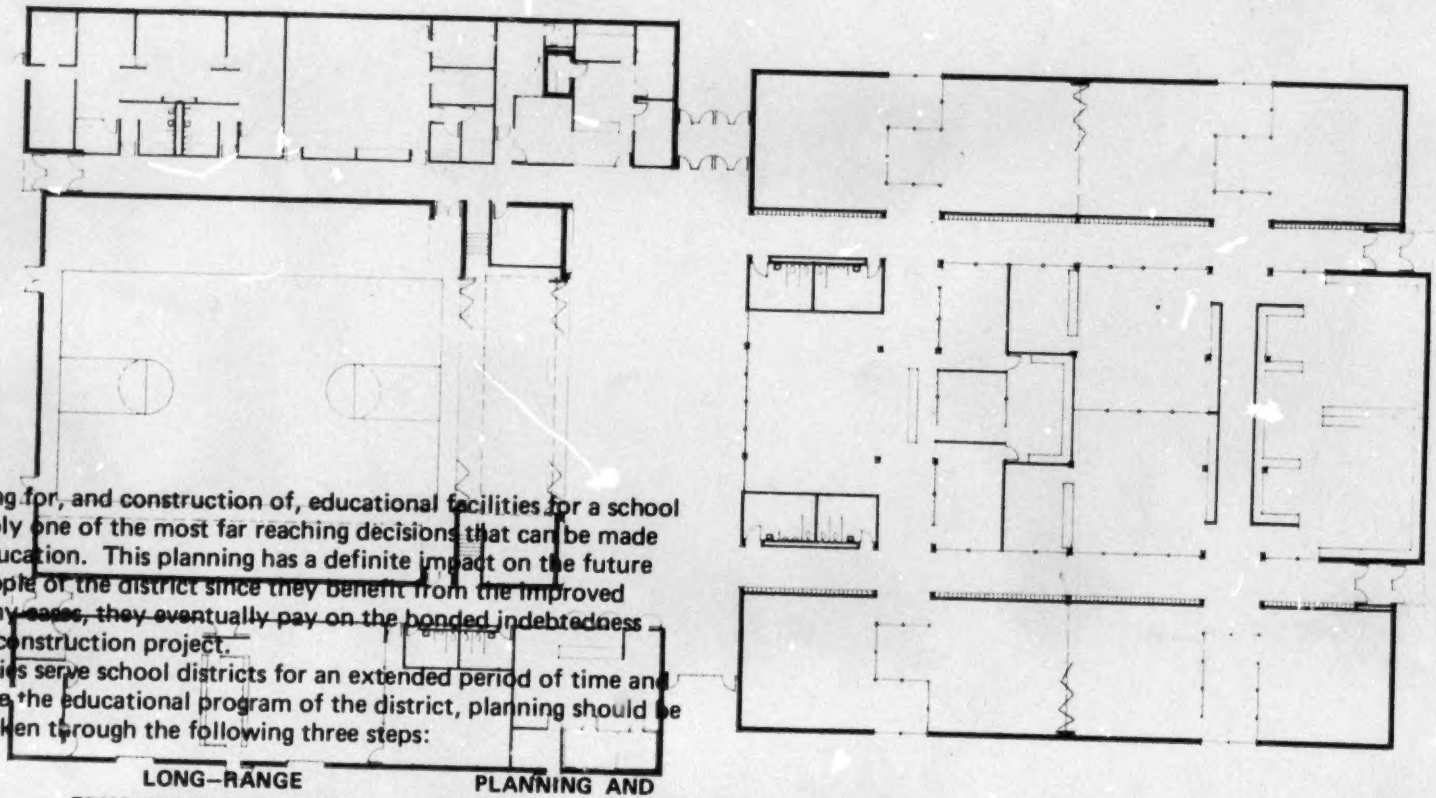
introduction



The planning for, and construction of, educational facilities for a school district is probably one of the most far reaching decisions that can be made by a board of education. This planning has a definite impact on the future of the young people of the district since they benefit from the improved facilities. In many cases, they eventually pay on the bonded indebtedness incurred for the construction project.

Since facilities serve school districts for an extended period of time and strongly influence the educational program of the district, planning should be carefully undertaken through the following three steps:

SURVEY

The community
The school population
The school program
The present school plant
The financial resources

LONG–RANGE EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

School district organization
Curriculum offerings
Auxiliary services
Staffing
Internal organization
Evaluation

PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION

1. Legal – secure attorney
2. Develop financial plans
3. Visit other school plants
4. Select an architect
5. Develop educational specifications and preliminary drawings
6. Obtain public acceptance
7. Approve final plans
8. Construction of facilities
9. Occupying facilities

survey phase

It is recommended that boards of education planning a facility improvement program arrange for a comprehensive survey of educational facility needs. This should be conducted by outside consultants. Consultive services are available from the Nebraska Department of Education, state colleges and universities, private colleges and universities and private firms. Consultants can provide local school authorities with an objective appraisal of the problems and suggest alternatives for the board of education to pursue. All school plant consultive services must be considered as advisory in nature. The final decisions concerning school plant improvements rest with the board of education and citizens of the local district.

The major elements contained in an educational survey include:

1) an examination of the trends in growth and development of communities of the district
2) a study of existing and desired community facilities with relation to the possibility, or desirability, of cooperative planning to solve mutual needs
3) a projection of probable future enrollments
4) a determination of the overall educational facility needs of the district in relation to the desired program of instruction
5) an appraisal of the adequacy of existing facilities in relation to the overall facility needs
6) suggestions regarding the location and selection of possible new sites or expansion of existing sites where needed
7) an examination of the district's financial resources relative to bonding capacity
8) a suggested immediate and long-range educational facility improvement program.

With the current energy crunch and the necessity for conservation of the world's resources, adequate planning for educational needs has taken on an even greater dimension than in the past. Boards of education have the responsibility of planning for educational plants with some degree of assurance they will serve the community well for what might reasonably be considered a useful lifetime for such facilities. It is difficult, if not impossible, to plan for 50 years in the future with any great degree of certainty that decisions will be correct. Therefore, decisions relating to planning should be based upon the best information available at that time. The survey of overall facility needs of the district is designed to provide school officials with this information that is essential to educational planning.

educational planning phase

Educational planning for local school districts entails the development and adoption of long-range plans by local boards of education. Needs must be determined and plans formulated to meet future educational requirements of the children within the school district. Today's changing educational programs and the declining birth rate of most areas of Nebraska dictate that plans to meet immediate and long-range facility needs of the district must be developed with maximum flexibility to meet changing programs, changing population patterns and changing enrollments.

Long-range planning should provide for: a safe and healthful educational environment for all children of the district, the elimination of overcrowded or inadequate facilities, complete educational facilities for all grade levels within the district, and housing of future enrollments that might reasonably be expected. It is essential that any anticipated enrollment increases be planned for in the long-range plan, but actual construction of facilities to house them should not be undertaken until their presence is assured.

Educational planning takes on many facets within a local school district and includes a series of factors to be considered in the planning process. These factors include:

School District Organization

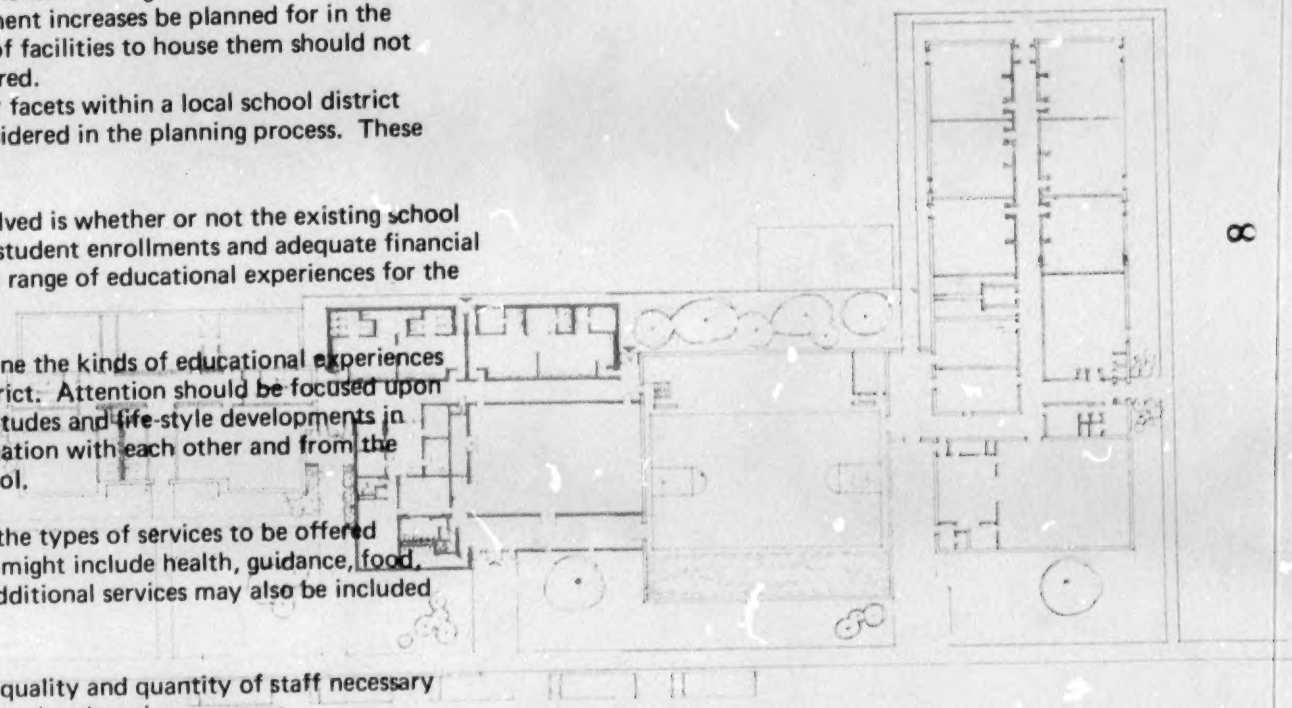
The first question that must be resolved is whether or not the existing school district boundaries encompass sufficient student enrollments and adequate financial resources to economically justify a broad range of educational experiences for the youth of the school district.

Curricular Offerings

Local district officials must determine the kinds of educational experiences deemed desirable for students in the district. Attention should be focused upon the knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes and life-style developments in students that will result from their association with each other and from the total educational experiences in the school.

Auxiliary Services

Determination must be made as to the types of services to be offered within the school district. Such services might include health, guidance, food, transportation and special education. Additional services may also be included to meet local needs of the district.



Staffing

Consideration must be given to the quality and quantity of staff necessary to carry out the comprehensive instructional and service programs.

Internal Organization

Attention must be given to the organizational pattern for the operation of the school system; e.g., K-4-4-4 plan; K-6-2-4 plan; K-6-3-3 plan; K-6-6 plan; team teaching; self contained classroom; ungraded, core programs; attendance center patterns; and optimum enrollments in attendance centers.

Evaluation

Plans should be formulated for assessing the effectiveness of the educational programs and services of the school district in relation to the goals and objectives of the school system.

legal services, financial considerations architectural selection phase

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After determination of program and facility needs for the local district and the adoption of a long-range educational plan, the board of education is ready to proceed with the implementation phase of the plan.

It is important for the school district to secure the services of a competent attorney for advice on all aspects of the facility improvement program. This expertise would be essential regarding bond election procedures, contractual agreements, site acquisition and district liability.

School officials should prepare a long-range fiscal plan relative to expenditures and resources for school plant construction. It is important to be prudent in the selection of the firm(s) to service the bond programs.

It is necessary that school officials exercise great care in the selection of an architect for any construction or remodeling project. The architect selected must be registered in Nebraska with the State Board of Examiners for Professional Engineers and Architects and should meet the criteria established by the board of education relative to the qualities and services they might expect of the firm engaged. In the construction of educational facilities, comparative selection of an architect is the most generally accepted procedure and entails the following steps:

1) An initial list is developed of architectural firms the board and administration feel meet the district's criteria and should be considered.
2) Information is solicited from the architectural firms included on the initial list.
3) The list is narrowed to two or three firms through information provided, contacts with previous clients and visitations to projects completed by the architects being considered.
4) Interviews are scheduled with the selected architects.
5) The architect is appointed by official board action and as a matter of courtesy all other interested firms are notified of the final choice.
6) The contract is negotiated for architectural services. The standard contract of the American Institute of Architects is frequently used with specific agreements as to payment of fees, schedule of the project, supervision, time schedule on plans, final approval, etc.

It is suggested that other school systems be visited to observe recently constructed facilities in operation. It must be kept in mind that the facility to be built should be tailored to the needs of each individual school district. Visits should not be designed for copying, but to gain insight into programs and designs that might be incorporated into the new facility being planned. Visit with the personnel using the facility being observed to learn its strengths and weaknesses as it is beneficial to learn from other school district's experiences.

educational specifications and preliminary architectural planning phase

An essential ingredient of any well planned educational facility is input to the architect from groups that will be using the facility. This input is provided through the development of written educational specifications for the school plant. Essentially, educational specifications relate to the architect the type of learning activities, community activities and functional relationships of the components of the facility so they might be translated into spaces to fit the needs of the desired program for the school.

The major responsibility for the preparation of written educational specifications rests with the school administration, but the need for securing assistance from local staff, pupils and citizens as well as outside professionals from various specialized fields must be recognized.

Specialized services may be obtained from personnel of the Nebraska Department of Education, state colleges and universities, private colleges and universities, private firms, local school districts and educational service units.

The board of education should review and approve the written educational specifications.

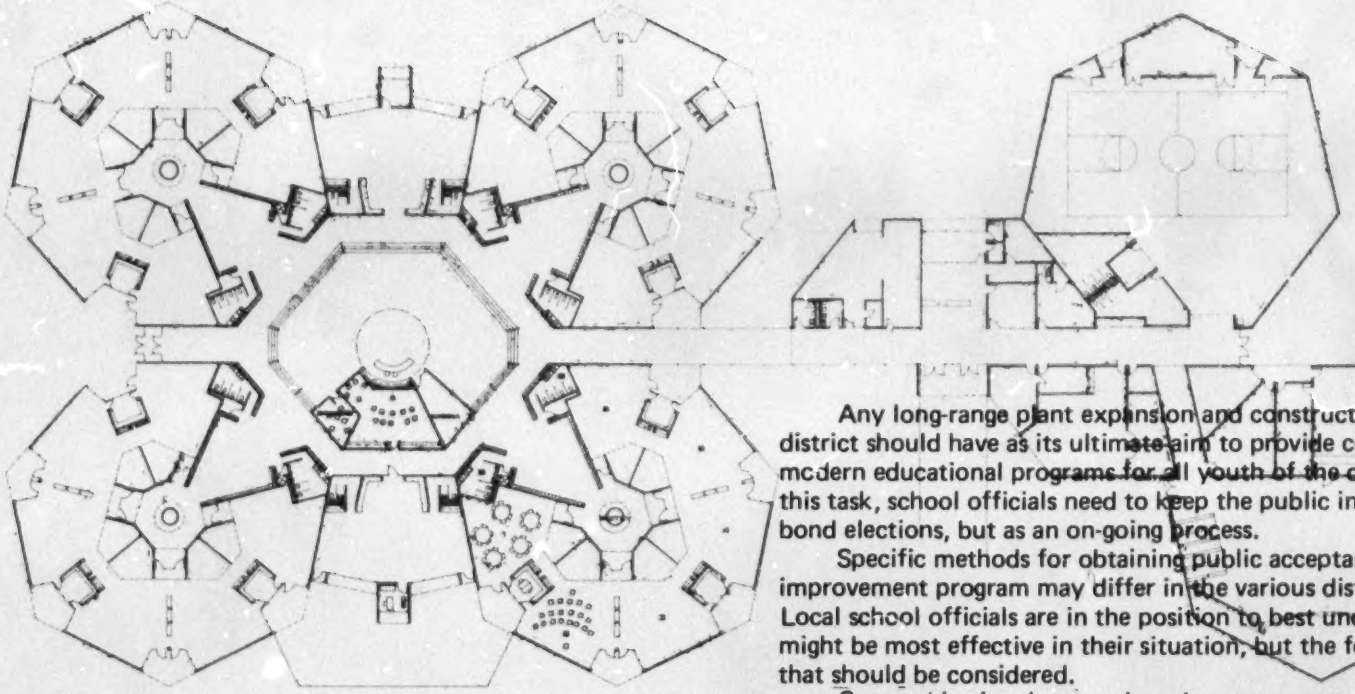
The board of education should acquire new sites or expand existing sites where needed. In site selection a review of the survey recommendations, comprehensive community plans and the opinions of the architect should be considered.

The architect should be directed to prepare preliminary drawings and cost estimates based upon the survey recommendations, written educational specifications, financial ability of the district, projected enrollments and availability of sites.

The administration, staff and board of education should review the preliminary architectural drawings to determine the extent to which they meet long-range objectives, written educational specifications and financial capability of the district.

Estimates should be made of the costs for construction of the building project, including all fees, site acquisition, landscaping, furniture and equipment, election, sale of bonds, bond retirement, bond interest, insurance and other financial obligations.

public acceptance phase



Any long-range plant expansion and construction program of the school district should have as its ultimate aim to provide complete facilities to house modern educational programs for all youth of the district. To accomplish this task, school officials need to keep the public informed, not only during bond elections, but as an on-going process.

Specific methods for obtaining public acceptance of a school plant improvement program may differ in the various districts throughout the state. Local school officials are in the position to best understand what methods might be most effective in their situation, but the following are some ideas that should be considered.

Community involvement is an important aspect of any school facility improvement campaign. Experience has shown that community input in the planning stages produces good ideas in addition to creating a feeling of "ownership" in the plans. Voters are more likely to give approval to plans if they have been involved in the development phase and those who are involved generally make excellent salespersons for the bond issue campaign.

The general public should be kept informed about the plans for school plant improvement. Honesty in all aspects of the plan is imperative for the success of the present campaign as well as any future campaign that may be necessary. Information should be explicit in identifying the educational and facility needs of the district and pointing out the proposal for meeting those needs identified. Public understanding and support should be obtained on two main issues – the fact that a need does exist, and that the proposal presented is the best of the various alternatives available to meet that need.

Set a bond election date far enough in advance to permit voters to become fully informed of the needs. The legal procedures at each step should be supervised by an attorney to avoid jeopardizing the sale of bonds through an election procedure that does not comply with all existing laws.

final architectural planning phase

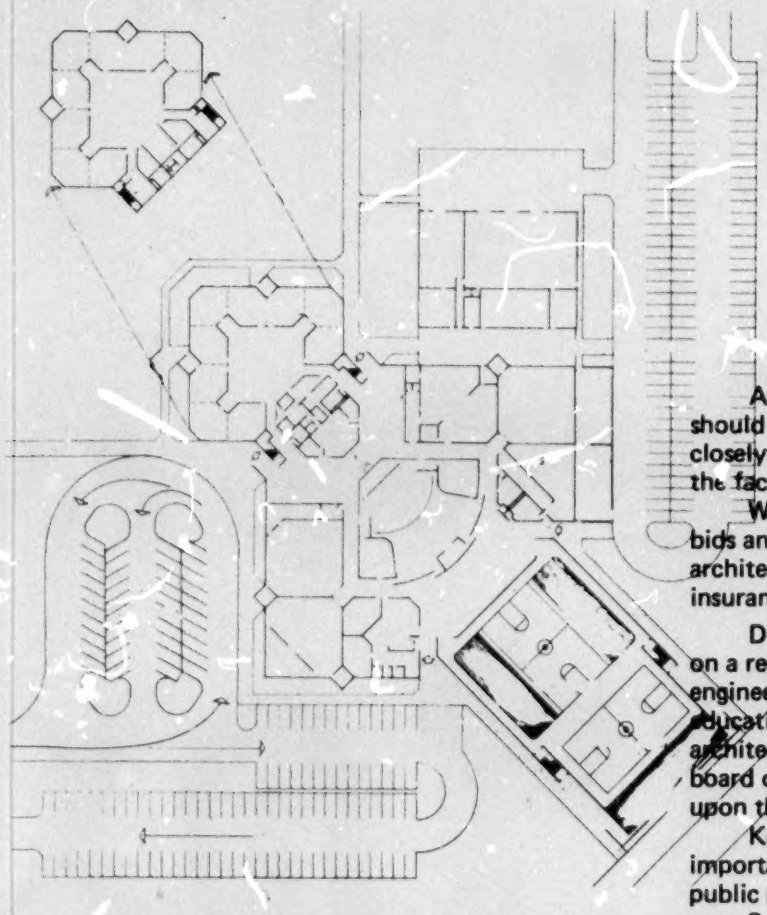
Following the successful election campaign and voter approval, the board of education should instruct the architect to prepare the final drawings and specifications for the facility.

Bidding or negotiation for the sale of bonds should begin. At this point, bond counsel can provide a valuable assistance in setting up a schedule for the sale of the bonds or accepting bond bids.

After the final architectural plans and specifications have been completed to the satisfaction of the administration and board of education, the board should authorize their acceptance and approve alternatives and special conditions. Before final approval, members of the survey committee and other educational specialists should be consulted in a critical review of final architectural drawings and plans. It should be emphasized that plans should be carefully reviewed before approval, but major changes in the facility may cause unexpected expenses that would cause contractors' bids to exceed the amount of money available for construction. The main planning phase must be before the bond election since major changes in plans at this stage must be carefully considered in relation to cost. At this point the amount of money available has already been pretty well established.

When the plans are acceptable, the board of education should give formal approval and proceed with plans for bidding by contractors.

bidding and construction phase



Advertising of the final architectural drawings and specifications for bidding should be undertaken with a final date set for receiving bids. The architect should closely supervise the advertising and acceptance of bids for the construction of the facility.

When all bids are in, the board of education should accept the lowest qualified bids and award the contracts. The board should, with the consultation of its architect, specify payment schedules to contractors, completion schedules, insurance, performance bonds. supervision, final acceptance conditions, etc.

During the actual construction of facilities inspection must be provided on a regular basis. This service may be provided by the architectural and engineering firms or by a clerk-of-the-works appointed by the board of education. This service would be under the direct supervision of a registered architect or engineer. The type of inspection would be determined by the board of education. The extent of inspection desired would be dependent upon the size and complexity of the project.

Keeping the public informed of progress of the construction phase is important. This is only a part of what should be maintained as an on-going public relations program.

School officials should make the final selection of furniture and equipment early enough during the construction phase to assure occupancy when the facility is completed.

At the completion of construction, school officials should conduct a final inspection. This inspection should include the school superintendent, board of education, architect and contractors.

Upon completion of the final inspection, the building and site should be prepared for occupancy.

The board of education should officially accept the new facility and terminate the contracts.

occupying and operational phase

Occupying a new school plant is an important step for any school district and details are easily overlooked. The process should be planned for in advance to assure an orderly transition to the new facilities.

Since the new facility has been constructed to house the instructional programs desired by the school district, it is important to conduct orientation programs for staff members to assure the most advantageous utilization of the facility.

Custodial and maintenance personnel need to become familiar with the plant and equipment and should receive instructions from the architect, engineers and manufacturers' representatives on proper maintenance procedure.

Students should not be forgotten in the orientation process since the facility has been provided for their use and benefit. Awareness of the features of the building insures better use as well as providing a means of good public relations for the district.

To protect the public investment in the new facility, it is important that the board of education set up an insurance program for the plant, equipment and furnishings.

Public dedication activities should be planned and conducted for the new facility.

Evaluation of all facilities is a continuous process. Boards of education have an obligation to the patrons of their school district to keep facilities in proper condition to house a modern educational program for the students. This can only be done through constant evaluation of facility needs as well as evaluation of the curriculum. Evaluation and planning are the essential keys to a quality educational program.

selected references to statutes regarding school facilities

Statute	Subject
10-701 through 10-703	Bond election procedures
10-704	Class I and Class II bonding limitations
10-705	Interest rates
10-706 through 10-711	Issuance of bonds
10-713	Investment of sinking funds
17-156 through 17-162	Sharing of facilities
23-820 and 23-821	Joint ownership and operation of recreational facilities
48-714.01	Boiler inspection
52-118	Public building construction bond
72-1101, 72-1103, 72-1108, 72-1109, 72-1114 through 72-1119	Building accessible to handicapped
73-101	Procedures for public bid letting
79-402 and 79-426	District reorganization
79-422 through 79-425	Building finance and handling of funds
79-425.01, 79-543, 79-544, and 79-4,153	Building and site outside school district

79-442	Contracts with board of education members
79-443	Board to maintain building
79-4,107 and 79-4,114	Eminent domain
79-4,117	School site purchase from state school lands
79-4,142	Renting of facilities
79-4,154	Lease purchase
79-504 and 79-505	Class I and Class II site selection
79-506 through 79-506.04	Class I and Class II building funds for facilities and teacherage
79-507	Class I and Class II sale of property
79-521	Class III, IV and VI sale of property
79-530	Sale of school property
79-541 and 79-542	Class III and VI building funds for teacherage
79-811	Sinking funds
81-502	Duties of State Fire Marshal
81-532	Fire exits
81-855	Architect for building exceeding $10,000